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CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST STOP IN NOSULAND

563 AT the end of the first day we stayed in a small farmstead where lived a Chinese tenant of one of the Nosu landlords. A mud wall surrounded the buildings, and an adobe tower spoke of risk and danger. The tenant, a Mr Liu, told us that his people had for six generations lived in the land of the Nosu and that they used to be better off than they are now. We all slept in a small room on the mud floor.
352 Here we were immediately up against the primitive customs of the people of this land. We found a delightful lack of furniture everywhere. There were no chairs, no tables, no forms, no beds. It was the simple life with a vengeance.
516 Everybody sat on the floor. For the older folks and guests nearly every house provides skins of the black bear. Sitting on these was a little better than sitting on the mud floor, but the skins got very hard after a while. After a few hours of this kind of sitting one's legs ached very much. I carried with me a small Chinese-made folding-chair, weighing three or four pounds, and it was a great relief to have this to sit on at times. To those who knew how, it was very easy to open or fold up this little chair, but those mountain folk found it very difficult to understand the simple mechanism that guided the opening and shutting. There was no end of fun with this little chair, and as every now and again it collapsed when not properly fixed, the onlookers roared with laughter as some adventurous young fellow for the first and possibly

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the last time in his life tried what it was like to sit on a chair. 516
When one thinks of these people one is reminded of the advertisements which appear so frequently in the papers that find their way to this part of West China, where "'Varsity" and other kinds of chairs of all sizes and stages of comforts are pressed on the attention of the young men of England who will soon bear the burden of empire. We often grumble at the great burdens the white young men have to bear, but I fancy a return to something of the simplicity of many of the Oriental peoples would be a great advantage all round.

The lack of beds and bedding was very striking. In some 352
of the larger houses we entered we found that at one end 513
of the long room composing the house there was a corner screened off, and here was a rough bedstead where slept the heads of the household. The majority, however, slept around the wood fire, with feet facing the warmth. When a large number of them were thus sleeping they looked very like a huge cart-wheel, with the fire as the nave of the axle. Men and women all slept around the fire, dressed as they were in the daytime, covered by their felt cloaks if they possessed such, and uncovered if they had none. Apparently they slept well.

These people scorn the Chinese because they are so effem- 186
inate and must have comfort before they can get on. I do not know what they thought of me. I usually managed to get some straw on the floor and rolled myself up in my wadded quilt, the ordinary Chinese "pukai." Mr Long and I often lay in our pukais after the others had got up, and yarned away about many things. Just near to where I was sleeping the 235
first night was a large basket, in which rested some of the fowls